Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities

in Science and Engineering: 1998

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FOREWORD

Scientists and engineers play a vital role in the U.S. educational system, in industrial competition, and in the generation of new knowledge. A challenge for our country is to attract the best talent from all sources to science and engineering to stimulate creativity, innovation, and change; contribute to the advancement of science and engineering; and foster a scientifically literate population. Different perspectives, talents, and experiences produce better ideas and ultimately better goods and services to meet the needs of increasingly diverse markets for products and services in the United States and abroad. Our Nation needs the most from its human resources. Indeed, we need the talents of all our citizens if science, mathematics, and engineering are to remain a hallmark of America's excellence. So vital is this to the National Science Foundation (NSF) that one of the strategic goals of NSF as outlined in the Government Performance and Results Act Strategic Plan FY 1997–2003 is to "strive for a diverse, globally oriented workforce of scientists and engineers." To ensure this outcome is achieved, a second strategic goal of NSF is to obtain improved achievement in mathematics and science skills needed by all Americans.

Some groups—women, minorities, and persons with disabilities—traditionally have not been fully represented in science and engineering. Although progress has been made in the achievement and participation of some of these groups, this progress has not been consistent, and full representation has not yet been achieved. This report, the ninth in a series of biennial reports to the Congress, the administration, and others who direct public policy, presents data on participation of underrepresented groups in science and engineering. It also documents factors important to success in science and engineering in precollege, undergraduate, and graduate education, and employment. The data and analyses presented here can be used to track progress, inform development of policies to increase participation in science and engineering, and evaluate the effectiveness of such policies.

Rita R. Colwell
Director

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